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American Committee for International Wild Life Protection

The International Office for the Protection of Nature.

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The International Office for the Protection of Nature

ITS ORIGIN,

ITS PROGRAMME,

ITS ORGANISATION

1931

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SPECIES ANIMAL AND VEGETABLE LIFE OF THE GREATEST USE TO MANKIND, OF THE GREATEST SCIENTIFIC INTEREST, THE LOVELIEST AND AT THE SAME TIME THE MOST INOFFENSIVE, ARE UNDOUBTEDLY THE OBJECT OF A CEASELESS PERSECUTION AND ARE GRADUALLY DISAPPEARING. TO AVERT THIS DANGER PROMPT AND WORLD WIDE STEPS MUST BE TAKEN. THIS NECESSITATES THE CLOSEST INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION BASED ON EXPERT KNOWLEDGE. TO ACHIEVE THIS A PERMANENT CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL CORRELATION AND SCIENTIFIC DOCUMENTATION IS INDISPENSABLE.

The International Office for the Protection of Nature

ITS ORIGIN,

ITS PROGRAMME,

ITS ORGANISATION.

BRUSSELS, January 1931.

9, rue d'Egmont.

THE protection of nature has in the course of the last years become increasingly important to all lovers of natural beauty, and to those, aware of the richness and abundance of the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

Today, in modern society every cultivated person watches with dismay the rapid decrease and disappearance of certain vegetation, fauna and picturesque scenery, which add so much to the beauty of this world and at the same time offer to science an incomparable field of investigation.

In long civilized countries, nature has little by little been ousted by agriculture, by industry, by ever expanding towns and she is rarely to be found in her primitive state.

If we do not wish solely to bequeath to future generations a mechanical and industrial world, we must take immediate steps to avert this ever increasing danger.

Added to this, since half a century, colonial powers, rapidly developing new countries, have not given sufficient attention to the danger of inflicting irreparable damage to the scenery, wild life and vegetation of these countries. It must not be thought

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AN EXAMPLE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FAUNA.

The rapidity with which big game is disappearing from the newly colonised countries is only equalled by the brutal and useless massacre which is its chief cause. In this instance, one in a thousand, African zebras and antilopes slaughtered in masses by a single hunter.

that these are exaggerated statements which only apply to small areas or to densely populated regions. Blind destruction always preceeds the building up of a prosperous and constructive civilization. Some of the colonies which formerly comprised 92 % rich forest land, today do not possess more than 5 to 10 %. A century ago, big game from the Cape to the Sahara was an essential part of the beauty of the African landscape; today, it is only to be found in limited spaces which are separated by vast regions devoid of all animal life. The largest and most inhospitable of seas no longer can offer its inoffensive birds and mammals its former shelter from the destructive hand of man. Science, alas, has come and daily perfects modern methods of exterminating life.

Before the World War the extent and imperativeness of this danger was not generally recognised, and it is only in recent years that from all sides, scientific and political alike, the protection of nature has been acclaimed as a necessary accompaniment to the economic development. It has been realised that the judicious and rational exploitation of some of the natural riches are as essential as the wise protection of those others which are sources of art and human knowledge.

In many countries this conviction has called forth the foundation of societies devoted to the **national** protection of nature. According to the country, these organisations have either been started by acts of government or by private enterprise.

The result of the activities of these various societies and institutions has been exceedingly satisfactory, and more than justified their existence. All interested in this question, however, strongly urge the necessity of a methodical and close co-operation between the ever increasing organisations, regardless of national boundaries.

Not only would a close collaboration be very useful in placing at the disposal of certain specialists, the results of experience acquired in other countries, but also it has been proved that the solution of certain questions can only be found by means of international agreements. To quote only one example; — the preservation of migratory birds is only possible if all countries concerned will take similar precautions.

In 1913 at the **International Conference for the Protection of Nature** at Bern, where seventeen governments were repre-

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THE DESTRUCTION OF USEFUL BIRDS.

The birds no more than the large mammals, escape these massacres even in the most remote parts of the world. Here is an example of some hecatombes of Marabous, a species of waders, which is of immense use in Central Africa.

sented, the idea of **international** protection was officially recognised on general lines.

The outstanding work of this conference was the decision to establish under the direction of Dr. Paul SARASIN, a permanent organisation which would deal with these questions in the interest of all.

The war made it impossible to carry out this decision, but ten years later the same question was raised with great urgency by many of the leading scientists.

In 1928, at the suggestions of **The Dutch Committee for the Protection of Nature** (founded in 1925), **The Belgian Committee** (founded in 1926) and **The Permanent French Committee for the Protection of Colonial Fauna,** *The International Union of Biological Science*, a society including the scientific academies of ten European countries, reopened the proposals of the Bern Conference, and decided to establish a central bureau, which was to become the centre of an international movement for the protection of nature.

Dr. P. G. VAN TIENHOVEN, head of the Dutch Committee, was made president of the new institution, which was given the name of **The International Office for the Protection of Nature.** Dr. J. M. DERSCHEID, General Secretary of the Belgian Committee, was put in charge of its management, and it was decided that for at least the first three years the Office headquarters would be at 9, rue d'Egmont, Brussels.

The first task of the Office was to collect from all over the world documents, as correct and complete as possible, which directly or indirectly touched on the question of the protection of nature. In order to do this, a special **Information-Department** was organised with the result that today, the central Office, apart from its already fairly extensive library, possess a collection of archives, forming the most important documentation on these questions to be found in the old world.

These documents are at the disposal of all who are interested in the question of the protection of nature, and a reading-room at the Office headquarters gives the public free access to all, except such documents as are of a confidential nature. The Office moreover, undertakes as far as possible to answer to postal inquiries. On behalf of public administrations, scientific societies and all who are interested, the Office tries to circulate, by means of publication, its most important texts and documents.

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Photo J. P. Strijbos.

SEA BIRDS KILLED BY OIL.

Since it has become general in the shipping of most countries to use heavy oils, aquatic birds are dying by thousands, destroyed by the residue of the mazout, left by the boats. An international agreement would be sufficient to stop this useless destruction.

Chief amongst these publications is « **The International Review of Legislation for the Protection of Nature** ». The aim of this review is to publish documents concerned with the preservation of species and natural scenery,— (game-, fish- and forestry-laws, acts legalising parks or other natural reserves). The review first appeared in April 1930 and will be issued from six to twelve times per annum.

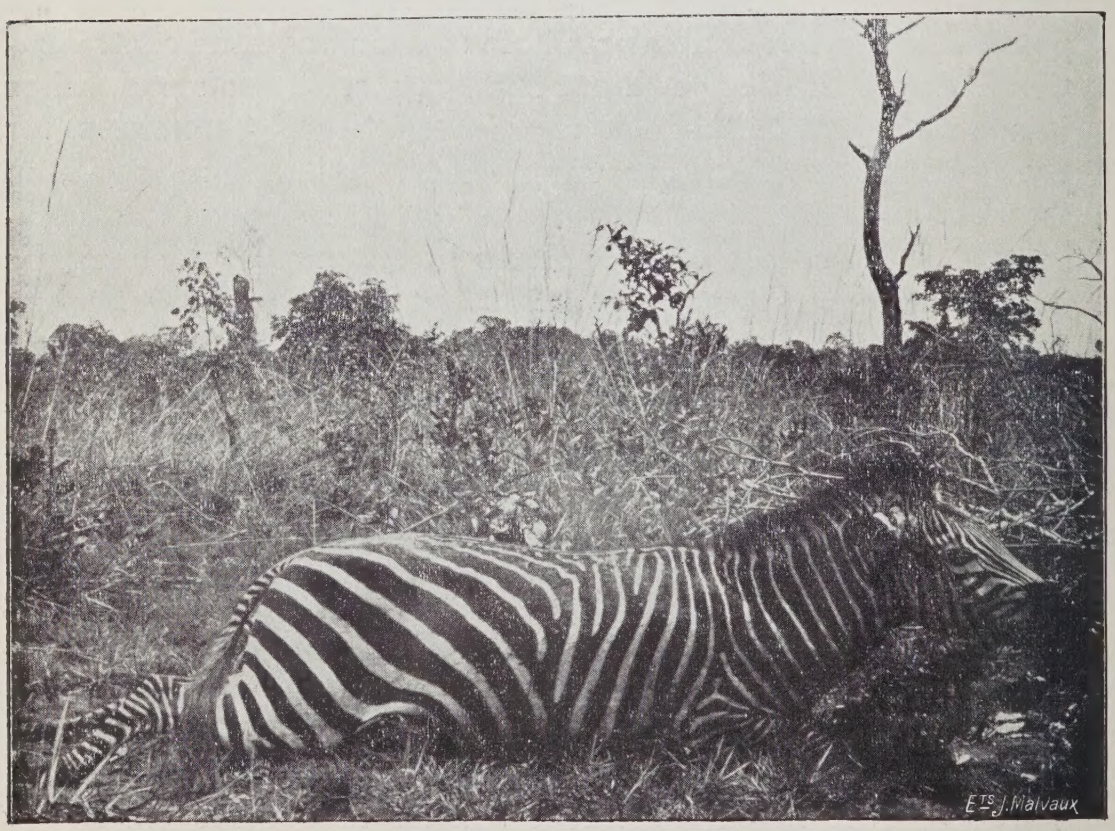
In the near future the Office also hopes to publish an **International Review of Bibliography,** which will refer to recent publications and articles on the protection of nature.

In addition to this object of technical documentation, the International Office also contributes to the centralisation of work done all over the world for the preservation of scenery and natural wealth; to realise this programme of co-operation, it is necessary to establish close collaboration with other international organisations, with hundreds of national and local institutions, and with numerous people who are working in every part of the world for the success of this ideal. This is especially dealt with by the **Correlation-Department,** which already has the moral support and patronage of many governments, societies and institutions. This section is also trying to organise a network of « **Corresponding-Members** » throughout the world who will keep the Office informed on all local questions of interest. As far as possible the Office is doing its best to encourage the centralisation and co-operation of all national groups. To this end, it has joined its efforts to those of **The International Committee for the Protection of Birds,** an organisation founded in 1922, on the initiative of Dr. T. Gilbert PEARSON, President of the Audubon Societies of the United States of America. It should be noted that this international group, which includes twenty-one countries, uses the Office headquarters as its European centre.

The efforts and activities of this section have greatly increased the documents at our disposal and faciliated an exchange system of periodicals, thanks to which the Office now receives regularly 350 reviews and special publications.

An **Education-Department** is also foreseen, which will enable the International Office to take an active part in the **propaganda** carried on everywhere to further the protection of nature. Owing, however, to the material difficulties, common to all new enterprises, we have not yet been able to organise this section. The object of this Department will be to operate chiefly by

The rarest species such as the Okapi, a large mammal unknown to science thirty years ago, are rapidly disappearing, being specially sought out on account of their rarity.



On the other hand, animals very common a few years ago, are becoming less and less numerous because they are the object of a large scale destruction for commercial purposes. To this end in 1925 near the little town of Eldoret in East Africa, more than 65,000 zebras were slaughtered and their skins sold at five shillings each.

means of popular publications, conferences, congresses, wireless talks and films, etc.

With regard to its practical achievements the International Office has already proved its utility. It is in this way that the Office has already been able to furnish various colonial governments with valuable information, allowing them to prepare with full knowledge of the motive, new legislation concerning game laws, regulations for national parks, game reserves, etc. In like manner the Office gave the benefit of its experience in these matters to Belgium, at the time of the definite institution in 1929, of the **Parc National Albert,** one of the largest and most complete natural reserves of the world. The institution of this Park marks a definite step in the history of the Protection of Nature, in proving that the idea of international cooperation is not impossible when it concerns the protection of the fauna, flora and the scenic beauty of a region of exceptional interest for scientific research. Let us remember that a third of the committee charged by His Majesty, King Albert, with the administration of this park, are foreigners, chosen among the most wellknown scientists, and also that, in the interest of this park, equal advantages are offered to all scientists regardless of their nationality.

The Office will always do its best to extend these principles of intellectual and international co-operation which can influence to such an extent the progress of humanity.

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The legal organisation of the Office is not yet definitely settled as the governments who are interested, have not yet taken their final decisions ; its expenses therefore, have so far been assumed by several persons devoted to the cause and by the following associations :

The International Union of Biological Science.

The American Committee for International Wild Life Protection, U. S. A.

The International Committee for the Protection of Birds, New-York and Brussels.

The Dutch Committee for the International Protection of Nature, Amsterdam.

The Belgian Committee for the Protection of Nature, Brussels.

The French Committee for the Protection of Colonial Fauna and Flora, Paris.

Two examples of the reckless and useless killing of interesting animals.
Above - an entire family of Hartebeests, killed by the same hunter.
Below - the « trophies » of a herd of Elands, beautiful antilopes, which are well on the way to extinction all over Africa.

The National Association of Audubon Societies, New-York.
The National Acclimatisation Society of France, Paris.
The Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire, London.

This does not include the hundreds of people and societies who are doing their utmost to extend the influence of the Office by gifts of books, and by the free use of their publications.

In 1929 the Dutch government decided to show its approval of the work of the Office by granting it an annual subsidy without waiting for the official recognition by the other countries.

These ressources do not, however, nearly cover the considerable expenses which such an organisation and its permanent activities entail.

The Administrative Council of the International Office has decided therefor, to appeal to the public for help, either in the form of an **annual subscription,** which would be used for current expenditure, or for **gifts** which would constitute the reserve fund.

The Administrators of the Office call on all who realise the importance of its work and ask for their support. They feel confident that their appeal will not pass unheeded, but that it will receive a sympathetic hearing.

Dr. HJALMAR BROCH, *Professor of the Oslo University, Director of the Marine University Station, Oslo.*

Baron DE CARTIER DE MARCHIENNE, *Belgian Ambassador for England; Honorary President of the Belgian Committee for the Study and Protection of Birds, London.*

Mr. HAROLD J. COOLIDGE, JR., *Secretary to the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection (for the Boone and Crockett Club), Boston.*

Dr. J. M. DERSCHEID, *Professor of the Colonial University of Belgium, Director of the International Office for the Protection of Nature, Brussels.*

T. IVANAUSKAS, *Professor of the University of Lithuania, Kaunas.*

Professor L. MANGIN, *Director of the National Museum of Natural History at Paris, President of the National Acclimatisation Society of France, Paris.*

Dr. ARNOLD PICTET, *Privat-Docent at the Faculty of Science, Geneva, Delegate to the International Union of Biological Science, Geneva.*

Dr. JOHN PHILLIPS, *Chairman of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection (for the Boone and Crockett Club), Boston.*

Mr. GEORGE PRATT, *Member of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection (for the American Museum of Natural History), New-York.*

Mr. KERMIT ROOSEVELT, *Member of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection (for the New-York Zoölogical Society), New-York.*

Dr. WALTER SCHOENICHEN, *Director of the State Office for Nature Protection in Prussia, Berlin.*

Dr. W. SZAFER, *President of the State Commission for the Protection of Nature in Poland, Cracow.*

Dr. P. G. VAN TIENHOVEN, *President of the International Office for the Protection of Nature and of the Dutch Committee for the Protection of Nature, Amsterdam.*

A. S. VERNAY, *Member of the Executive Committee of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire, London.*

Dr. C. WESENBERG-LUND, *Professor of the Copenhagen University, Director of the Danish Freshwater Biological Laboratory, Copenhagen.*

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